

# Life of the Spirit

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## Life of the Spirit

A review devoted to the theology and practice of prayer and the spiritual life, it is designed to assist in the re-establishment of the Catholic tradition of ascetical and mystical writing in the English language. Contributors are therefore encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers.

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# Life of the Spirit

Vol. I

FEBRUARY 1947

No. 8

## COMPANIONSHIP WITH GOD IN DIVINE SOLITUDE

BY

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

*God not only loves his creatures as a craftsman does his work, but also by a kind of social friendship, as a friend does a friend, inasmuch as he attracts them into the society of his own enjoyment. This he does that their glory and blessedness may be that which is his.<sup>1</sup>*

aint Thomas is here speaking of the amicable society between God, Three in One, and the soul endowed with grace, which finds its full enjoyment in the communion of saints to which God's love attracts. This companionship in holiness is entirely suited to man's social nature, though it transcends the powers of nature, and every human hope and aspiration. According to St John, those who see God have eternal life.—‘This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God’ (Jn. 17, 3).<sup>2</sup>

In spite of this, Christians frequently do not live up to the ideals of their Master. The antidote for such human weakness cannot be to water down those very ideals so as to make them more acceptable to unbelieving critics. It is rather for them to learn that it is no part of the Church’s mission to be engaged in the construction of an earthly paradise of peace and plenty. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world.

The soul’s supernatural life is sanctifying grace. This divine enrichment bestowed out of God’s bounty places a man in another world. Christ’s Spirit of adoption, which he has received with this ‘newness of life’, admits him into the inner circle of God’s household. The new life of the spirit is to be worked out within the social framework of the Church, after the manner in which that same life in its plenitude is lived by the saints. They are in close communion and fellowship with each other, by reason of the total concentration and absorption of their thought and love in God, their Common Good shared by each, and their *Summum Bonum*.

*Lex intra mensuram est: ultra mensuram Gratia.* ‘The Law is within measure, Grace is beyond measure’. (St Ambrose, *Expositio*

<sup>1</sup> St Thomas in 2 *Sent.* d. 26, p. 1, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>2</sup> cfr. St Thomas, *Summa*, Ia, 10, iii.

*supra Lucam.* Lib. vii; c. xi, v. 33.) The life of grace is a measureless life precisely because it is eternal and a prelude to the life of glory. 'This is the will of my Father that sent me: that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have everlasting life'. (Jn. 6, 47.) Of this life St Peter speaks: 'He hath given us most great and precious promises: that by them you may be made partakers of the divine nature'. (II Peter i, 4.) In the thought of St Paul, the 'newness of life' is an adopted sonship making us 'conformable to the image of his Son' (Rom. 8, 29), who himself is by his divine nature the image of the Father. Not otherwise than through incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church, do we become in Christ and, through him, sharers by way of similitude in the divine nature. The Christian soul is given power to enter into the divine inheritance and to share in God's riches, by being caught up into the divine activities of knowledge and love made most intimate by the personal indwelling of the Blessed Trinity as in a tabernacle. In this we see the fulfilment of our Lord's words, 'If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him'. (John 14, 23).

'The elect are truly of the family of God: in heaven they are gathered into the life-stream of the Holy Trinity who dwells in them. The Father in them generates the Word, the Father and the Son exhale within them the Spirit of Love. Charity gives them a likeness to the Holy Spirit, the beatific vision assimilates them to the Word, who transforms them into the likeness of the Father of whom he is the image. In each one of them the Blessed Trinity known and loved dwells as in a living shrine, and still more are they in the Blessed Trinity, at that peak of Being, Thought and Love'.<sup>3</sup>

The Christian life then is essentially a life of the Spirit. Not indeed as though a man should live as a disembodied soul—his body-soul composition makes impossible such an attempt—but human beings differ from all other lower types in the universe of God's making in that they are not only individuals but persons. A Christian is a Christian no more if he allows himself to live and behave as one of the masses, for in so doing he loses his personality and his independence. But a spiritual man is one who lives not only according to the functioning of the highest faculties of his soul, but in a manner by which he may be known to belong to Christ in being ruled by his Spirit. In the state of fallen nature man must win the independence which is due to him as a person, not by following his natural propensities or those of the herd instinct. His independence must be sought for a nature which is in the process of being healed and elevated by the

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<sup>3</sup> P. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Perfection Chrétienne*, vol. I, pp. 138, 139.

grace of God, and it will be communicated to him through the spirit of Christ.

Our Lord often shows clearly that he has no intention of allowing his Church 'to fall into the dust of religious individualism'.<sup>4</sup> Certain types of piety easily take on an excessive individualism when they become merely private and divorced from the mind and life of the Church. It is the divine intention that the Church should be God's kingdom. And the human soul is one of the palaces in that kingdom in which he is to reign. 'The Church is Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ poured out and communicated'.<sup>5</sup> His life-blood is also poured out into, and communicated to, the human soul, by that 'fountain of waters springing up into eternal life'. (Jn. iv, 14) which is sanctifying grace. That communicated life is at the heart of prayer and sacrifice, which have their divinely appointed expression in the liturgy of the Church.

The life of grace in the individual soul, as the *semen gloriae*, holding within it the roots of glory, exacts a ceaseless effort after closer union with God in Christ. This life is identical in kind with the state of beatitude in the heavenly kingdom. 'Grace and glory are classified together, for grace is nothing else than a beginning of glory in us'. (St Thomas, II-II, 24, 3, ad 2.) 'The hope of future happiness may be in us for two reasons. First, by reason of our having a preparation for, or a disposition to, future happiness: and this is by way of merit; secondly, by a kind of imperfect inception of future happiness in holy men, even in this life. For it is one thing to hope that the tree will bear fruit, when the leaves begin to appear, and another, when we see the first signs of the fruit'. (*ibid*: I-II, 69, 2; cf. *De Veritate*, 14, 2).

This beginning of beatitude is particularly realised when the soul is occupied in contemplation, because the contemplation of divine truth is the end of the whole human life. (II-II, 180, 4.) 'This contemplation will be perfect in the life to come, when we shall see God face to face, wherefore it will make us perfectly happy: whereas now the contemplation of divine truth is possible to us only imperfectly, namely *through a glass and in a dark manner*'. (I Cor. 13, 12.) (*loc. cit.*)

Yet it is not alone in contemplation precisely as an act of the intelligence that perfection is found. 'Nevertheless the loving contemplation of God here below is the most efficacious means of attaining the perfection of charity: it is indeed a means conjoined to its end'.<sup>6</sup> It is love of the contemplated which incites to contemplation, 'inasmuch as through loving God we are aflame to gaze on his beauty.

<sup>4</sup> Clerissac, *The Mystery of the Church*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Masson, *The Christian Life and the Spiritual Life*, p. 29; cf. *Summa*, II-II, 1 & 7.

And since everyone delights when he obtains what he loves, it follows that the contemplative life terminates in delight . . . the result being that love also becomes more intense'. (St Thomas II-II, 180, 1.)

The perfect development of the spiritual life consists in charity which is to abide for ever, even when faith and hope have passed away to give place to the vision of God in the light of glory, and in the perfect possession of God. The continuity of tradition which meets in St Thomas in the thirteenth century is carried on into our own times through the Council of Trent. The Catechism of that Council states, 'The kingdom of grace must precede that of glory, for in him, in whom the grace of God has not reigned, neither can his glory'. We cannot designate glory otherwise than a certain perfect and absolute grace.<sup>7</sup>

St Thomas is in the current of patristic tradition coming from the East, and especially from St Augustine in the West. According to the Holy Doctor's teaching, grace is a 'new spiritual principle which transforms and renews human nature by the communication of the divine life: in other words the state of deification of which the Greek fathers habitually speak. It is not merely a power that moves the will but a light that illuminates the mind and transfigures the whole spirit. This combination of the Augustinian tradition with the characteristic doctrine of the Greek Fathers is perhaps the greatest theological achievement of the scholastic period, though it is usually little noticed in comparison with their philosophical synthesis'.<sup>8</sup>

Grace is the product of God's love, which makes a person gracious in his sight and his works meritorious. This rich endowment given out of the divine bounty is a participation of the divine nature and divine life. The supernatural virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost grow out of the deified soul, even as the powers of the soul are springs of activity coming from the innermost nature of the soul itself.

The perfection of the life of grace is found in union with God by charity, to which the only way is by leaving the whole world and all creatures. And the foundation of this union is likeness. 'The more a thing approximates to God's likeness the more acceptable it is to him; whence the Apostle gives this instruction, "As God's favoured children, you must be like him".' (*Ephesians v, 1.*)<sup>9</sup>

In all created things there is a trace of the Holy Trinity, since 'everything inasmuch as it has being inclines to the similitude of God, who is being itself'.<sup>10</sup> But man is made to the image of God, and of the Blessed Trinity. St Thomas teaches that the image of God is

<sup>7</sup> Catechism of the Council of Trent, Proem to the Lord's Prayer.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Dawson, *Medieval Religion*, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> St Thomas, *De regimine principum*, lib. I, c. 9.

<sup>10</sup> II-II, 1, ad 3; Ia, 45, 7; cfr. 33, 3.

found in intellectual creatures alone. 'Considering the degree of perfection with which each one approaches God according to its capacity, the intellectual creature, *quæ est capax summi boni*, is more like unto the divine perfection than the whole universe in its entirety. For it alone is properly the image of God'.<sup>11</sup> The supernaturalising of man under grace is by a deepening of that image which is implanted in him by nature. The exemplar after which he is modelled is the God-man who is the most perfect image of God: 'Christ is placed before men as the exemplar of all'. (III. 39, ad 3.) The complete realisation of the likeness of the soul to God is in the vision of God, which is the highest activity of the intelligence in beholding God unveiled.<sup>12</sup> 'The beatific vision', writes M. Maritain 'is the most perfect, the most secret and the most divine solitude with God. Yet it is the most open and most inhabited solitude. Because of it another society is formed —the society of the multitude of blessed souls, each of which on its own account upholds the divine essence and enjoys the same un-created Good'. (*op. cit.* p. 424.)

Even in this present life, as St Thomas says, 'the Holy Ghost is spoken of as the spirit of adoption, because through him a likeness is bestowed on us of the natural Son of God, who is begotten Wisdom'. (II-II, 45, 6 ad 1.) The standard exemplar upon whom human perfection is built is Christ our Lord. He is at once the image of God, a wayfarer and a beholder of the divine countenance (*comprehensor*). The nearer the resemblance in the soul to the divine exemplar the more perfect the image. As he that sees the Son sees likewise the Father (*John* 14, 9), so he that resembles the Son is made like also to the Father. Furthermore, the indwelling of the three divine Persons in the souls of the just implies a transformation bringing about in them a resemblance to the Persons who take up their abode there. (Cf. I, 43, 5c and ad 2.)

St John of the Cross explains how this 'union of likeness' is achieved, 'when the two wills—namely, that of the soul and that of God—are conformed together in one, and there is naught in the one that is repugnant to the other. And thus when the soul rids itself totally of that which is repugnant to the divine will and conforms not with it, it is transformed in God through love. This is to be understood of that which is repugnant, not only in action, but likewise in habit, so that not only do the voluntary acts of imperfection cease, but the habits of those imperfections, whatever they be, are annihilated . . . when all that is unlike God and unconformed to him is cast out, the soul may receive the likeness of God; and nothing will then

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, in *The Review of Politics*, October, 1946, pp. 422, 423.

<sup>12</sup> I, 12, 1; cfr. I, 93, 7 and 8.

remain in it that is not the will of God and it will thus be transformed in God'.<sup>13</sup>

This transformation, involving the annihilation of every moral imperfection, is under grace the work of the ascetic life, through the exercise of both natural and supernatural virtues, and the mortification of self.

There is a still closer 'union of likeness' of which St John of the Cross writes; it results from the temporal giving of the Divine Persons to the sanctified soul, and may be regarded as a prolongation in time of the eternal processions within the life of God himself. We must quote the saint at length: 'The Holy Ghost, like one breathing, raises the soul by his divine aspirations, informs it, strengthens it, so that it too may breathe in God with the same aspiration of love which the Father breathes with the Son, and the Son with the Father, which is the Holy Ghost himself, who is breathed into the soul in the Father and the Son in that transformation so as to unite it to himself; for the transformation will not be true and perfect if the soul is not transformed in the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity in a clear and manifest degree. . . . Nor is it to be thought impossible that the soul should be capable of so great a thing as that it should breathe in God as God in it, in the way of participation. For granting that God has bestowed upon it so great a favour as to unite it to the most Holy Trinity, whereby it becomes like unto God, and God by participation, is it altogether incredible that it should exercise the faculties of its understanding, perform its acts of knowledge and of love, or to speak more accurately, should have all done in the Holy Trinity together with It, as the Holy Trinity Itself? This however takes place by communication and participation, God himself effecting it in the soul, for this is to be transformed in the Three Persons in power, wisdom, and love, and herein it is that the soul becomes like unto God, who, that it might come to this, created it to his own image and likeness. . . . Souls have by participation that very God which the Son has by nature, and are therefore really gods by participation like unto God and of His society. . . . And although this union be perfect only in the life to come, yet even in this, in the state of perfection which the soul is said now to have attained, some anticipation of its sweetness is given it, in the way I am speaking of, though in a manner wholly ineffable'.<sup>14</sup>

There are evidently dangers and misapprehensions in this doctrine. Pope Pius XII has pointed out some of them.<sup>15</sup> It would be a mistake

<sup>13</sup> *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk. II, ch. v, nn. 3, 4.

<sup>14</sup> *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XXXIX, trans. Lewis, nn. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. pp. 394-397.

<sup>15</sup> *Mystici Corporis Christi*, June 29, 1943.

to suppose that the advance towards virtue is solely due to grace and the working of the Holy Spirit. There must also be a close co-operation between the human and the divine. 'No one, evidently', says His Holiness, 'can deny that the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ is the only source from which all supernatural power flows into the Church and its members; for as the Psalmist says, "the Lord giveth grace and glory". But the unremitting perseverance of men in works of holiness, their eager progress in grace and virtue, and their strenuous efforts, not only to reach the summit of Christian perfection themselves, but also, in the measure of their power, to spur others to a similar achievement—all these effects the heavenly Spirit will not produce unless those men do their part with constant and energetic application. "Divine blessings", says St Ambrose (*Expositio Ev. sec. Luc.* iv, 49), "are not granted to those that sleep but to those that watch".'<sup>16</sup>

## FROM ST AUGUSTINE

Tam potenti enim natura deus fecit animam, ut ex eius plenissima beatitudine quae in fine temporum sanctis promittitur redundet enim in inferiorem naturem, quod est corpus.—*Ep. cxvii, 14.*

When touched by Grace, the soul such virtue knows,  
Brimmed with beatitude it overflows  
Even to the body. Even the dull flesh feels  
New vigour, and new zest for life reveals.

JOHN SEARLE.

Cf.—'This grace is sometimes so great, that out of the fullness of devotion here given, not the mind only but the weak body also feels great increase of strength bestowed on it'.

*The Imitation.* Book iv, chapter 1.

THE PURGATIVE WAY IN THE  
ANCREN RIWLE

BY

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.



INCE the *Ancren Riwle* was written for recluses of a solitary and strict type we might suppose it to contain either the bare bones of a very strict rule of life—horary, penances and prayers—or the highest form of spiritual teaching designed for the well-nigh perfect. When we remember that Mother Julian was an anchoress at Norwich we may expect to find a rule, designed for such as her, to contain deep mystical doctrine. It is probably for reasons of this nature that so few people open this straightforward and normal book of sound spiritual advice. In effect the *Riwle* is an ascetical work designed to instruct beginners in their first retirement from the world. Although he is evidently writing for contemplatives, the author scarcely mentions 'mental prayer' or its equivalent and passes in silence all mystical experience. Indeed he expressly states that he is writing for those who belong to the 'Order of St James', by which he does not mean, as some have supposed, a special religious order of that name. He is writing rather for those who primarily set out to be good Christians fulfilling the main part of that definition of religion, 'to visit and assist widows and fatherless children, and to keep one's self pure and unstained from the world'—'thus does St James describe religion and order'.<sup>1</sup> The author apparently regards the first half of this Apostolic dictum as descriptive of the Active Life which pertains to religious men and women remaining in the world (and 'especially some prelates and faithful preachers') while the second half describes the Contemplative Life, that of the Anchoress, and does not imply joining any religious order of men or women. 'The latter part of this saying relates to anchorites, to your religious order, who keep yourselves pure and unspotted from the world, more than any other religious person' (*Introduction*, p. 8). He has in view, therefore, the most general requirements for the contemplative life, Dowel in a contemplative setting.

These particular anchoresses lived the eremitical life but without taking any public vows or belonging to any religious order, as the Introduction makes quite plain. They took private vows, in particular consecrating their virginity to their heavenly Bridegroom. Thus con-

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction page 8. NOTE:* All references are here given to the modernised version: *The Nun's Rule, being the Ancren Riwle modernised* by James Morton. Medieval Library Vol. XVIII; London. Chatto & Windus, 1926.

secrated they lived in poverty, chastity and obedience; poverty, for they depended to a certain extent at least upon the charity of neighbours for their support;<sup>2</sup> obedience, in their subjection to a spiritual director who was usually the parish priest or the bishop. Naturally, therefore, a rule intended to instil the fundamentals of such a life would differ from the rule or constitutions of a definite religious order. It is far less trussed up and canonically moulded, because the life of this sort of recluse cannot be legislated for in the same way as a regular group living the common life. The details of an anchoress's existence depended in many ways on the individual herself, and her rule of necessity had to be broad and adaptable. So we find in this document a competent description of the life of any beginner. The first and last chapters alone deal with the precise mode of life of the holy women who lived in those cells close by the side of parish churches in the Middle ages; and even in these chapters we may quarry many principles valuable for the ordinary Christian.

Experience has shown that this *Riwle* was admirably suited for all states of life after the first conversion, for it enjoyed a very great popularity from the time of its writing for a good three hundred years. It was read widely, not merely in England, but particularly also in France. In England, as Professor Chambers has shown,<sup>3</sup> this popularity served to continue a thoroughly English tradition in the prose of the country. We presume, therefore, that at the same time it continued the English tradition of spirituality. But the *Riwle* exists also in Latin and French versions, both nearly as early as, if not earlier than, the English.<sup>4</sup> There has been some discussion in fact as to which was its original language. For a long time it was thought to be the work of Richard Poore, Bishop of Salisbury (1217-1229) written for three anchoresses at Tarrant Keynes in Dorset. But this tradition rests on some additions to the Latin version. Fr Vincent McNabb, O.P., put forward the theory that it was written by an English Dominican. He based his argument on various similarities and possible connections: the author speaks of 'our laybrothers' in referring to the office of *Paters* and *Aves*; it contains a prayer which has been attributed to Blessed Jordan of Saxony. Fr McNabb went on to attribute the authorship to Friar Robert Bacon, O.P. (1170-1248) on far more slender evidence, the chief being that the *Riwle* refers to a certain man of the author's acquaintance who undertook mortifications very similar to those of St Edmund of Canterbury, and Robert Bacon describes these austerities in his life of St

<sup>2</sup> But the author omits Poverty from the vows he discusses in the Introduction, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *The Continuity of English Prose*, by Professor Chambers (O.U. Press).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Note at the conclusion of the present article.

Edmund.<sup>5</sup> There is, however, little certainty as to the origin of the *Riwle*, except that its English origin is practically established beyond doubt. It was written before 1230 for at that date it was revised for a community of recluses larger than the three mentioned in the text as the recipients of the *Riwle*.<sup>6</sup> Professor Chambers has shown<sup>7</sup> that as the *Riwle* has come down to us it must have been written about 1200, and that the translation into Latin for the Sisterhood at Tarrant was not made till nearly 1300 by Simon of Ghent, Bishop of Salisbury.

The three Sisters for whom the *Riwle* was originally written were evidently devout and very pious, and also comfortably settled. One MS preserves the following description:

Much word is there of you, what gentle women ye be; for your goodness and your nobleness of mind beloved of many; sisters of one father and of one mother, in the flower of your youth, ye have left all worldly joys and become anchoresses.<sup>8</sup>

The author is frequently at pains to assure these three that his warnings against the grave abuses of the anchorite life are meant to cast no reflection on their own excellent behaviour:

• Whatever may yet remain to be said of those rules, I would that they were as well kept by all, as, through God's grace, they are kept by you (p. 38).

I write more particularly for others, for nothing here said applies to you, my dear sisters, for ye have not the name, nor shall ye have, through the grace of God, of staring anchorites, nor of enticing looks and manners, which some at times alas contrary to the nature of their profession practise (p. 41).

But would to God, dear sisters, that all the others were as free as ye are of such folly' (p. 68, cf. pp. 144-5, 163 and 171).

Besides Roger Bacon, St Gilbert of Sempringham has been put forward as a possible author. But the true author remains hidden. Whoever he was, he must have been a man of sound judgment, deep learning and wide knowledge of the Scriptures and the Fathers. There are few traces of scholasticism, and Aristotle himself does not attempt an appearance. The author allegorizes a great deal on the Scriptures, but he does so in a remarkably restrained manner, if we

<sup>5</sup> Miss Hope Emily Allen has refuted the theory of Dominican authorship. cf.: Vincent McNabb, O.P., 'The Authorship of the Ancren Riwle' in *The Modern Language Review* IX, 1; January 1916. Hope Emily Allen, 'The Origin of the Ancren Riwle', *The Modern Language Assn. of America*, XXXIII, 3, 1918.

<sup>6</sup> These three have sometimes been identified with Emma, Gunilda, and Christina, maids-in-waiting to Queen Maud, daughter of St Margaret of Scotland, who had started a hermitage at Kilburn in 1135.

<sup>7</sup> *Continuity of English Prose*, pp. xcvi. sqq.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Chambers, *op. cit.* xcvi.

compare it with his contemporaries.<sup>9</sup> The quotations from the Sapiential books and from SS. Austin, Gregory and Aelred often have a deep moral content of a nature that precludes any suggestion of the merely 'pious tag'. Like Langland, the author shows a thorough appreciation and love of the liturgy, and he often quotes from the hymns and responsories of the Roman Breviary as well as the collects.

The author has a peculiarly attractive style and his imaginative pictures often touch deeper realities than the merely quaint. He has closely observed the ways of a child, how the child likes to have the object beaten that has hurt him (p. 140), how the mother will play with him (p. 174). The description of the back-biter (pp. 66-67), singled out by Professor Chambers, and the ways of adding sins through circumstances, are examples of the author's vivid and powerful gift of description. And there are many medieval details of interest preserved through these descriptions—the way men would tie knots in their belts, as we do in our handkerchiefs, to remind themselves of some commission (p. 300), the criminal taking 'sanctuary' in the church (p. 130), the occupation of the ash-gatherer (p. 161), the knight's shield hung up in the church after his death (p. 297).

Like Langland too the author writes with the doctrine of the three ways and the two lives at the back of his mind. He compares the elect of God of the first way to pilgrims who live an active life in the world. The second type is dead to the world, having left it for the religious life, to be alive in Christ. The third type is nailed to the cross of Christ, and to this class belong the anchoresses (pp. 263-267). The three Marys who came to anoint the body of our Lord stand for the degrees of penance in the ascending scale of perfection (p. 282), while evidently the anchoress chooses the better part of Mary (pp. 314-315). The traditional teaching about the Mystical Body is as much part of the *Riwle* as it is of the Vision of Piers Plowman: the whole Church is supported by the prayers of the recluse (p. 107), a conception which is almost unintelligible today in our activist generation; he refers naturally to our Lord as the head of us, the members, without attempting to explain it (p. 272), so that his first readers must have been familiar with this great Pauline doctrine.

There is no dull reading in this rule, and it can be a constant delight today as it must have been to those three sisters at Kilburn seven hundred years ago. It is divided into eight parts:

Introduction: the nature of Rules.

1. Religious Service.
2. On Keeping the Heart.

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<sup>9</sup> cf. Beryl Smalley, *Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*.

3. Moral Lessons on Solitude and Recollection.
4. Temptations, External and Internal.
5. Confession.
6. Penance.
7. Love.
8. Domestic Details.

We shall follow this order in the description of the Purgative Way, except that we shall include the individual rules of the final section under the general discussion of the nature of rules in the Introduction.

**NOTE:** The Early English Text Society has recently published the Early French and Latin versions of the *Ancren Riwle*—*The Latin Text of the Ancrene Riwle* edited by Charlotte D'Evelyn (Oxford Univ. Press; 31s. 6d.) and *The French Text of the Ancrene Riwle* edited by J. A. Herbert (Oxford Univ. Press; 28s.) These are part of a larger undertaking to make available all the surviving MSS. of the treatise for the benefit of such scholars as Miss Hope Emily Allen, to whom both the present volumes are dedicated. It is hoped in this way to facilitate a final decision on the date, authorship and original language of the work. It is already fairly well established that the English preceded the Latin and French versions and that these latter are translations. But the translations are of great value even to the non-specialised reader who will be able to follow the development of the *Riwle* and witness its popularity in Europe as well as in England. It is a pity from this point of view that the introductions to both volumes are so short and so limited in scope. The general reader would need to be shown the different characteristics of the versions, where they differ or agree, and the history as far as it is known of the translations. But even without this help, which will come rather as the fruit of these editions, the reader will find much to delight and inspire. The penultimate chapter on the rule of love possesses a new charm in its early French form, and the first hints of the Rosary devotion stand out clearly in the titles for the 'Five Joys' of our Lady—*Les Cynk Ioies Nostre Dame*. The Latin text, from an early fourteenth-century MS. at Merton, has the advantage of a very detailed table of contents, not found in the other versions. Here again the chapter on charity reads with the same freshness and direct inspiration that we find in the early English and the early French. The *Riwle* is indeed a masterpiece that did not suffer from the early translator; on the contrary it served as a spiritual text-book in Latin, French and English and was in its own way and age as important as the *Imitation*.

## ON THE NEED FOR RECOLLECTION

BY

H. C. GRAEF

*Nothing is really necessary for us except God. To find God means recollecting our mind in him. And in order better to recollect one's mind, all superfluous intercourse and friendships as well as unnecessary talk must be cut out; nor should a man desire to learn novelties; but he should rather shun all things by which the mind is distracted, and begin to consider the abyss of his miseries . . . for in all the world I delight only in two things, namely in knowing God and myself.*

Bl. Angela de Foligno.



THESE words were written in the fourteenth century, when Europe and Christendom were still synonymous terms. They speak of a state of mind and soul almost unknown in our modern world save to the few who profess to lead the contemplative life. Yet this state, which is called recollection, or the 'gathering together' of one's thoughts and desires, is perhaps more necessary now than in other times, for it is the one means by which our age can be restored to sanity.

'Nothing is really necessary for us save God'. This was at least theoretically admitted, even if not always practically acknowledged in their lives, by the men and women of Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages. Theology was then the queen of sciences; men cared desperately for a true knowledge of God; the heated theological battles of the first centuries, the fight against Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, as well as the medieval controversies on Platonism and Aristotelianism, Nominalism and Realism—what else were they but the expression of men's profound concern with the real nature of God and with his own soul?

It is as easy as it is foolish to laugh at the fight against an iota carried on by St Athanasius, the heroic defender of the *homoousios* against Arius—but with the absence or presence of this small letter stands or falls the divinity of our Lord and hence the dogma of the Trinity, that is to say the whole Christian religion. These men who so lived in and for their faith knew that there is nothing really necessary for us save God. But this is not even theoretically admitted by the majority of our contemporaries. There are many things without which they profess themselves unable to live—money or sexual love, cinema or cigarettes—all of them material. But that it should be necessary to have God seems a very dubious proposition to them, seeing that they believe themselves to have built up their lives to their com-

plete satisfaction without him. They live in a world without God—and what, they ask, is lacking to them?

Now it is, indeed, not so easy to find God. For this, as Bl. Angela says, it is necessary to recollect our mind in him. But this has become so difficult under modern conditions of life as to seem almost impossible. There are two things that are essential to recollection: silence and repose, at least during a certain period every day. Now the whole technical development of the last hundred years has been increasingly detrimental to just these two: gramophones and wireless as well as all the contemporary means of travel whether by land or by air are sources of perpetual noise and unrest, penetrating even to the remotest corners of the earth. We are all caught in this whirlpool—but God does not speak out of the whirlpool; his still small voice cannot be heard against a background of perpetual noise and haste.

Yet these external hindrances are but the lesser enemies of recollection and can be dealt with comparatively easily when the bigger and more interior ones are overcome. The things that prevent it most effectively are enumerated by Bl. Angela herself: they are superfluous human intercourse, irrelevant friendships and unnecessary talk. They were obviously common failings in her, as in any other, time, but they have increased in frightening measure in our age. The desire for constant intercourse with one's fellows, the living in the mass, the often almost pathological fear of being alone even if only for one evening in the week—these are symptoms which betray a complete absence of the inner life. The technical development, again, fosters this frame of mind: if there is no human being present, let us at least have the wireless on, so that some unknown voice from the air may prevent us from entering into ourselves, or let us go to the pictures and fill our minds made for better things with the emptiness of a foolish story of love or adventure.

Then there is the desire for knowing much, especially in the way of sensational novelties. With the wireless giving us news five times a day or more, with newspapers in the morning, at midday and at night, we are craving for information of any kind and every kind, however irrelevant, as long as it is 'news'—whether it be the latest football 'event', the new hair style of the Duchess of X, or the discovery of another and even more destructive instrument for killing each other. It needs a great effort to overcome this desire for knowing for the mere pleasure of 'being in the know'—but without quelling the desire recollection is impossible. A mind perpetually hunting for ephemeral news is unable to taste the joys of resting in the Immovable and Eternal, which is God.

Once a man has entered even a little way into the sphere of the Eternal—and recollection is nothing else—he will 'begin to consider

the abyss of his miseries'. It is this which holds so many souls back from a life of recollection. They have a secret fear of the abyss that will open up before them once they abandon the whirlpool and are left face to face with themselves. When man, relieved for a time of all the voices shouting into his ears how wonderful he is and how great are his achievements, begins to reflect on himself, he will realise that he is not a self-contained unit, but is a creature, desperately dependent on innumerable other creatures, animate and inanimate, and that, in the last resort, both he and they owe their very existence to another, a First Cause, the source of all being. He sees himself as a creature, whose life and death are under the dominion of Another, and so he begins to know not only himself but also that Other.

Then begins to dawn that light of wisdom which is the fear of the Lord, and things will gradually assume a very different aspect. For, while we realise our own weakness and dependence, we also become more and more deeply aware of the power, the wisdom and the love of the Triune God, who desires to communicate himself to us. In this divine power, wisdom and love in which we begin to participate according to the measure of our creaturely love we shall be able to make a stand against the evils threatening us. For as we enter into this divine strength that comes by recollection, we lose our fear of creatures, of events that might harm us, and at the same time that propensity to 'wishful thinking' that is born from fear and refuses to face the facts before us. For through recollection we shall see things in their true proportion, the nightmares will vanish and also the 'castles in Spain' of our daydreams, and in the light of the divine Reality which has entered our soul we shall know the realities of our earthly life for what they are, and from this same light receive the strength to deal with them in God's way and not in our own, feeble, self-centred way. Then, despite the noise that is going on around us, we shall have truly found God and shall realise with an ever-deepening conviction that there is nothing that is really necessary to us save him.

## BLESSSED ARE THE PURE OF HEART

BY

S. M. FRANCES, O.P.



LL those who would re-enter Paradise must first be tried by fire', says St Ambrose.<sup>1</sup> Thus the soul which aspires to the earthly Paradise of union with God in contemplation must necessarily be purified, for only the pure of heart can see God. Thus purification both of the senses and of the mind, says Père Garrigou-Lagrange,<sup>2</sup> is caused by a special breathing of the Holy Spirit whose working here becomes manifest in the Gifts of knowledge, Filial Fear and Fortitude for the purification of the senses, and the Gift of Understanding for the purification of the mind.

KNOWLEDGE shows experimentally the nothingness of creatures, both within and outside ourselves. It differs from Wisdom in that we see created things in their proximate cause (i.e., failures and imperfections) and not in the Supreme Cause. This Knowledge of the nothingness of created things is meant to lead us to the desire of God alone.

FILIAL FEAR is the Gift which inspires the soul with the fear of being unfaithful, and in spite of the sensitive nature being greatly depressed, weak and sluggish in good works by reason of the lack of attraction, the spirit is ready and strong. It is also this Gift which strengthens and guides the soul through severe temptations against chastity and patience.

FORTITUDE fills the soul with determination to stand firm in spite of all difficulties and to continue to serve God cost what it may. 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice for they shall be filled'. (Matth. v. 6.)

UNDERSTANDING. St Thomas tells us (II-IIa. 8, ad 1) 'the word *intellectus* (understanding) implies an intimate knowledge, for *intelligere* (to understand) is the same as *intus legere* (to read inwardly). Since, however, human knowledge begins with the outside of things as it were, it is evident that the stronger the light of the understanding, the further can it penetrate into the heart of things. Now the natural light of our understanding is of finite power; wherefore it can but reach to a certain fixed point. Consequently man needs a supernatural light in order to penetrate further still, so as to know what it cannot know by its natural light: and this supernatural light which is bestowed on man is called the Gift of Understanding. Since man is ordained to supernatural happiness he needs to reach to certain

<sup>1</sup> In Ps. 118, sermo 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Trois Ages.* t. 2.

higher truths for which he requires the Gift of Understanding'.

It is called 'understanding' and not 'reason' because it is superior to reasoning; it is the principle of intuitive knowledge, simple and penetrating as a shaft of light. It perfects a living faith. It is not the result of study—it proceeds from a special illumination of the Holy Spirit—which, not in an abstract or theoretical manner, but with a vital, concrete and practical force, penetrates into the depths of the soul, underlining the immense distance that lies between words and symbols on the one hand and the spiritual realities they represent on the other. It prevents any confusion between sensible consolation and purely spiritual gifts.

The Gift of Understanding does not only prevent error but penetrates in a vital manner to the inner depths of the truths of Faith, especially those which are above the reach of the reason; not that it explains these mysteries but in the obscurity of faith it enlightens the soul with a penetrating glance difficult to put into words. Under strong temptation to discouragement and even despair this gift keeps the soul conscious of its final end and the reward of eternal life. It also removes a certain dullness of mind and so enables us to see ourselves far better than by formal examens of conscience.

It purifies the soul by lifting it above sensible images and error, and together with the Gift of Knowledge it raises the soul to infused contemplation, i.e., a penetrating and sure act of faith which is nothing else than a special breathing of the Holy Spirit; an act secret, peaceful and loving, which is nevertheless obscure, and the cause of suffering, because the mind left outside this purely spiritual act seeks its own satisfaction and finds nothing. The stars in this night are the occasional enlightenment of the mind on truths of faith and passages in the Gospels.

The temptations against chastity and patience which accompany this state of prayer are meant by God to elicit intense, often heroic, acts of the contrary virtues which root in the very depths of the soul the guidance of right reason over the senses, and the divine life of grace in the acquired moral virtues. The very intensity of the acts which are made increases immediately the virtues in question. The soul learns her own misery by these temptations and other trials and the need she has of the prayer of petition. Thus are we taught to distrust ourselves and to depend on God alone and on the help given by our Lady and the saints when we beg their aid in our distress.

As during the night the eye does not see objects which are close at hand but does see the stars which are millions of miles away, so in this darkness of soul we do not see or taste the human working of the mind, but the spiritual eye is gradually trained to see the infinity of God and in contrast with the sight of God's greatness we see our own

misery more clearly. Before we can see the stars of divine truth we have to learn to walk bravely in the night of faith. The spiritual eye is purified by temptations against faith and hope and humility; exterior trials and mortifications are sent by God himself who knows, as no one else can, the depths that have to be reached by the purifying fire. Tauler says that the Holy Spirit creates a great emptiness in the depths of the soul where there still cling remains of pride and selfishness. This emptiness is a healing and it increases the soul's capacity to receive. (2nd sermon for Pentecost.)

The purifying light of the Gift of Understanding seems to darken the mind because the spiritual soul is being introduced into the region of divine mysteries which are obscurity to the mind; for the soul, in this life, must always live by faith, and unless the Gift of Wisdom is also influencing the soul there is no sweetness but only cloud and suffering. For the Light Inaccessible where God dwells is darkness to the weak powers of the soul which is now living above the ordinary power of reasoning, and therefore as it were paralysed, yet conscious of the divine influence working through this Gift. The lower powers of the soul, i.e., those which depend on reasoning for knowledge, are obscured, while the higher powers, i.e., the purely spiritual intellect and will are enlightened and, by this obscure light, united to God.

Faith unites the soul directly to God, the Gift of Understanding works always in the realm of faith; its light does not remove the obscurity of faith, but the union is experimental.

### MARGERY KEMPE

HER DAYS AND OURS

BY

ALBERT HADSHAR



ECORDS and diaries of individuals, especially of such as this creature' Margery, reveal both highlights and shadows, black chaos on either side of the mountains of youth. In this long-forgotten book of Margery Kempe the slightest innuendo, the merest agitation, the unbalanced phrase, the flicker of surprise each in its own allusive manner betrays some chosen subject for human enquiry and scholarship above all others and sweeter in the discovery than the gums and vineyards of Engaddi. Like Christina Mirabilis—the surprising character who lived two centuries before Margery—this burgher's wife has been called the 'Astounding'. The Philosopher's happy phrase *admiratio est delectationis causa* may then be our invitation to share the medieval experiences of one whose delights were found in the homesteads, and

on the pilgrim paths of the crumbling later Middle Ages when the youthful bloom of the thirteenth century was wellnigh a memory and the modern decay already growing.

The apogee of the Middle Ages was fast vanishing when Margery entered history. Margery was born at Lynn about 1373 in a period of fierce political rivalries, tortuous religious problems and fast-growing agrarian discontent, all flowing from the tragedy of epidemic sickness in 1315 and 1316, when the Black Death laid low all classes and all ages throughout the land from Melcombe Regis in Dorsetshire to York in 1349 and thence to Scotland and Ireland in the following year. Within the hearts of men the spiritual forces of the ages of faith grew stronger and more virile in face of the necessary social and political rebuilding, and the foundations of our catholic western culture were strengthened and revitalised by the sight of the Flageleants from Flanders who marched through the London streets calling the citizens to penance and prayer. The mysticism of earlier days gave way to a healthy asceticism which proved a counter attraction to the moral decay inevitable in time of national disaster. Hence materialism and the promised social millennium were not the evils that they later became when Renaissance dilettantism had lightheartedly scorned penance and reparation.

All these influences were deep below the surface. To all appearances life was still hard and perilous, and the chronicles of the death of Edward III, when Margery was only four, record nonchalantly 'unprofitable things continued long after'. The reign of Richard II, the Londoners' King, is the reign of revolt and dissatisfaction. The burdens of villeinage and the periodic poll-tax depressed and angered the masses and revolt flared up throughout the country. In Blackheath there were forces of armed insurgents under Wat Tyler and the 'Mad Priest' John Ball, and also in Essex and the East Anglian ports of Yarmouth and Lynn, where the Flemish who had once called London to penance had now become too-successful merchants. The men of the eastern counties began their systematic persecution and mass murder of the hated foreigners. Against such a background of penance and persecution, of spiritual insecurity and social chaos the baby mind of Margery remained occupied with the toys and trinkets of her father's house. Her dream days were enlivened by the brawls in the narrow streets, though her nights were calm and still.

Margery's birthplace was the seaport town of Lynn in Norfolk, through which passed the merry-making groups of pilgrims bound for Walsingham, 'England's Maryland'. Five times had her father, John Burnham, been Mayor of this important borough, and the Mayor's daughter gazed from the house of this prominent and respected citizen upon the entrancing sight of noisy, bustling, pious

hordes. And so she must have become filled with an undying thirst for travel. Until her death, about 1440, the town life of her native Lynn was uppermost in her memory, and she herself was, everywhere in the world, a microcosm of Lynn's variegated life. When her life had really begun, Margery's vivid activities and manly adventures were dutifully recorded incident by incident. But till 1936 Margery was a nonentity. While the history of mysticism gave her a passing mention (not without some misgiving as to her respectability), literature glibly remarked that she had written one small book now snugly included among the genuine treasures of a Cambridge library, and one other, now completely lost. The student had to be content with the tiny quarto of eight pages printed about 1501 by Wynkyn de Worde. This consists of gleanings 'taken out of the boke of Margerie Kempe of Lynn'. Twenty years later these extracts were reprinted with some slight variations by H. Pepwell. Owing to the unfortunate loss of the original book, Margery was to be found only in the works of Tanner, Ames and Graesse, and these formed the sources for the little contained in the Dictionary of National Biography. The extracts of 1501 are in the form of a dialogue between Margery and our Lord.

Dibdin notes it in his *Typographical Antiquities*, and after giving us the title page of this short treatise 'emprynted in Flete-Strete by Wynkyn de Worde', makes an observation shared by the authors we have just mentioned. 'The following short extract, in modernised orthography, may serve to show to what an inflamed pitch of enthusiastic rapture and gross absurdity some of the devotional treatises of this period were wrought'. The passage quoted is no doubt a little too ardent in expression to be fully appreciated by the Rev. Thomas Frogshall Dibdin. The offending sentence reads: 'She desired many times that her head might be smitten off with an axe upon a block, for the love of our Lord Jesus'. The phrase is, admittedly, somewhat romantic and characteristic of an 'exaltée' piety, but hardly 'curious'! Dibdin's judgment has failed to appreciate the lover's desire to show externally what is so deeply felt in the heart. The criterion of criticism should have been the Canticle of Canticles, not the musty books in the library of the Roxburghe Club. And then the discovery of the whole book has shown us quite a different character. Everything is now beginning to fall into its proper relation with the whole; a vast canvas has now swallowed up the microscopic detail. In the Library of Lieutenant Colonel W. Butler-Bowden's house at Plessington Old Hall, Lancashire, there was unearthed a new Margery, scarcely hinted at in the meagre dialogue of the University Library at Cambridge. At the Victoria and Albert Museum Miss Hope Emily Allen identified it as the last *Book of Margery Kempe*. The original manuscript begun in 1436 by the priest, who knew 'a man dwelling in Dewchland' who

first wrote the book in what 'was neither good English nor D<sup>e</sup>uewh, nor were the letters shaped or formed as other letters were', contained a leaf added to the first quire before the proem was written. This leaf would not have been added within the bound complete first quire which was discovered. Finally the paper, probably made in Holland about 1440, confirms the evidence that we have not the original manuscript but a very early copy made by the priest whose failing eyesight peered from behind a pair of spectacles at this 'short treatise of a creature set in great pomp and pride of the world, who later was drawn to our Lord by great poverty, sickness, shames and great reproofs in many divers countries and places, of which tribulations some shall be shewn hereafter, not in the order which they befell, but as the creature could have mind of them when they were written'. This book came into the possession of W. Butler-Bowden through the Carthusian Priory of Mountgrace, near Northallerton, which was founded in 1397 (when Margery was twenty-four). In the history of medieval writing this Charterhouse plays no mean part, since a monk of this community, Nicholas Love, was the author of *The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesus Christ*, an adaptation from the *Meditationes Vitæ Christi* of pseudo-Bonaventure.

Margery's diary or book of confessions is now the seed-ground of fierce controversy and widely divergent thought. No mystical treatise had hitherto been produced to the accompaniment of heavy groans and sweet tears. This is the first of its kind, and withal a complete autobiography in a sturdy prose, a travel book of vivid eye-witness accounts and personal impressions, an outstanding historical document and a masterpiece of literary excellence.

When Margery was twenty years of age a newly elected burgess of the town, John Kempe, was attracted by the charms of this fair young daughter of John Burnham. Her high-spirited character and dashing manner were everywhere known and caused the usual jealousy and suspicion. Even after their marriage that same year, 1393, Margery continued in her carefree way of living, and her own description of the girl who captured the heart of John, 'ever having tenderness and compassion for her', is that of a young character, gay and naturally self-assertive. 'She wore gold pipes on her head, and her hoods, with the tippets, were slashed. Her cloaks also were slashed, so that they should be the more staring to men's sight, and herself the more worshipped. She delighted in the fine clothes becoming to a Mayor's daughter and the wife of a burgess, and had little but contempt for the slanderers who sprang up wherever she appeared. Domestic details of her home-life can be supplied from such sources as the Paston Letters and 'The Household Book of Dame Alice de Bryene', 1412-1413. Colourful clothes and a gallant air were not merely the fashion

but, far more, the joyous overflow of a boisterous age. It was, at least in Margery at this time, the outcome of innocence and youthful attraction subtly blended with the inevitable desire to attract friends to admire and suspicious gossips to be kept in suspense. Her counterpart among the bright young set of her day is the exquisite fop described by the contemporary poet, Gower:

More jolif than the brid in Maie,  
He maketh him ever fresh and gaie,  
And doth all his array disguise,  
So that of him the newe guise  
Of lusty folke all other take.

After giving birth to her first child (thirteen other children were yet to rise up and bless this 'joyful mother of children'), there appeared to Margery in vision 'Our Merciful Lord Jesus Christ . . . in the likeness of a man, most seemly, most beauteous and most amiable than ever might be seen with man's eyes, clad in a mantle of purple silk, sitting upon her bedside'. From that moment her illness vanished and she took food herself. During this vision the young mother of twenty was gently reproved with the loving reproach, 'Daughter, why hast thou forsaken me, and I never forsook thee?' This appealing invitation to greater things received little response, since after this she acted 'wisely and soberly enough save she knew not verily the call of our Lord'. But youth is not the age for wisdom and sobriety, and even her husband's anxious request for reform caused a violent reaction. John Kemp was concerned about his position and reputation, while Margery cared little for either provided she be 'worshipped by the people'. It is difficult to put into words the essence of her attractive friendliness, youthful grace and genuine nobility. She is always within sight and never in our grasp. Margery has been psycho-analysed by a Free Churchman as well as by Catholics, by the lawyer as well as by the historian; she is now an inflamed mystic, now a morbid neurotic, now filled with the loftiest aspirations, now seemingly petty. She has been held up as an example of the good catholic laywoman, so well acquainted with the facts and details of doctrine and imbued with the very *res et virtus* of her religion. But this would apply to many a burgher's wife, and especially to her anchorite contemporary Dame Julian of Norwich, with whom Margery had much 'holy dalliance by communing in the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ the many days that they were together'. Her catholicity seems to have all the vigour and tenacity of a Grand Inquisitor. With vigour and tenacity does this valiant woman make her curt replies to Bishop Repingdon of Lincoln, for whom she had had to wait three weeks. Besides obtaining her request she received an alms of 26 shillings and eightpence; also, without the least hesitation she attempts to reform

the household of the aristocratic Archbishop Arundel of Canterbury. After having obtained from His Grace written permission for weekly communion she told him of the great oaths and reckless words used by his squires, yeomen and clerks. Sitting with her in the garden of Lambeth Palace, 'full benignly and meekly he suffered her to speak her intent, and gave her a fair answer, she supposing it would then be better. And so their dalliance continued till stars appeared in the firmament. Then she took her leave, and her husband also'. The scene reminds us of a later event when this garden was visited by another valiant woman, Mary Ward, whom the then Archbishop of Canterbury called 'the Great Evil' who was more harmful than half-a-dozen Jesuits. For a wager she entered the palace walls, passed the gardener and scratched her name with a diamond ring upon the window-pane.

But Margery had her frivolities, too, and for this reason her book is all the more honest and not a chronicle of a sad would-be saint. The secret of her character is rather a certain generosity and manliness which seemed independent of religion, family circumstances or other external influence. It was this 'no half-measure' disposition which gave her acts that intensity and singleness of purpose so often associated with characters in medieval history. Mistress Kempe even went so far as to start a business on her own and despised the prudent warnings of her slightly older husband. Henceforth she would support herself 'for pure covetousness and to maintain her pride'. In this age of 'belly cheer' she hired workmen for her own mill and brewery. For nearly four years Margery was one of the well-known brewers in Lynn, and her management was stern and successful until mysterious happenings in the ale-yard and rumours of approaching disasters so ashamed her 'good servants that no one would work for her'. Her horse-mill also proved a failure and on Corpus Christi Eve her last workman left the mill in disgust. Margery now became the centre of attention. The gossips were happy seeing 'that neither man nor beast would serve the said creature', while the wise men saw in all this failure the merciful providence of God withdrawing Margery from 'the pride and vanity of the wretched world'. The prelude to this first conversion was a vision of Paradise and her sorrow for past sin was accompanied with such sensible joy that from this time we may date her life-long watchword, 'it is fully merry in heaven'. Her joy and pride in the merry life of heaven scandalised her neighbours, who were suspicious of this sudden amendment of so much pomp and worldly circumstance, and consequently even the talk of her chastity and bodily penances and lengthy vigils became matter for ridicule and contempt.

At this stage in her conversion Margery was busily mortifying herself and from a kiln nearby she obtained a hair-cloth 'such as men

dry malt on'. While denying herself bodily comfort she must have disturbed her husband John when she suggested that he too should join in this manner of life 'by abstaining from the lust of their bodies'. Like the Wife of Bath, Margery became much perplexed over the respective merits of chastity and virginity. The Wife speaks garrulously of her seven husbands and Margery longs for 'the mantle and the ring and the white clothes' of virginity. Equally insistent on their own particular views, both show a fanatical concentration and over-dwelling on a subject too lofty and too richly ennobled by Christ himself to be bandied from mouth to mouth in the common ways of Norfolk or on the bridle-paths of Kent. This essential and delicate element of human psychology and morality which Margery in her youthful fervour so unremittingly and painfully attempted to control nearly unbalanced her whole life. After two years of earnest devotion the temptation to infidelity reached its greatest vehemence on the eve of the patronal feast of her parish church, St Margaret's, attached to the local Benedictine priory. During the First Vespers of the feast she was 'so laboured with the man's words' that she could not 'hear her evensong, nor say her Paternoster, or think any other good thought, but was more troubled than ever she was before'. After evensong the tempter repented and Margery 'went away all ashamed and confused in herself at seeing his stability and her own instability'.

Her anxiety and distress at her wounded pride in the service of her merry heaven were relieved on the Friday before Christmas Day, when an anchorite at the Preaching Friars offered his assistance and direction. Throughout that Christmas season Margery followed the instructions of her anchorite director, who approved of the 'high meditation and very contemplation' promised by our blessed Lord. Her prayer was always preceded by a very elaborate composition of place. She speaks to St Anne at the birth of our Lady, is with St Elizabeth at the birth of St John, and accompanies Mary to Bethlehem. She goes into exile with the Holy Family and takes with her 'a pottle of wine and honey, and spices thereto'. Even the three Kings find not merely the Child with his Mother but also 'this creature, our Lady's handmaiden, beholding all the process in contemplation, wept wondrous sore'. It is from this early conversion that she began to weep 'full plenteously and full boisterously for desire of the bliss of heaven, and because she was so long deferred therefrom'.

This sobbing and moaning was a source of scandal to many during her pilgrimages in later life, and together with her scrupulous longing for chastity and the outward insignia of virginity form the most serious objections to any obvious claim to sanctity. However, these exaggerations must be explained by the piety and devotional practices of the age. The martyrdom of daily life with its quota of petty perse-

cution and pinpricks had been exalted by spiritual writers from the earliest times. The second letter of Sulpicius Severus to Annelius formulates the theory daily practised by St Theresa of Lisieux no less than by St Martin of Tours concerning whom the Bobbio Missal tells us that 'Martin has not refused martyrdom; it is martyrdom which has refused Martin'. Gregory the Great speaks of the double martyrdom, the one in the mind alone, and the other in the mind and in active persecution at the same time. Thomas à Kempis expounded the same lesson of a twofold martyrdom in his eleventh conference to his novices. St Jerome, in letter 130 to Demetrias, associates martyrdom with the daily striving for chaste living, *habet et servata pudicitia martyrium suum*. This quasi-martyrdom was the particular theme of the medieval Irish ascetics who with their own characteristic artistry assigned the colours white and green to these two forms of the daily carrying of the Cross. Green martyrdom (*glas-martre*) was the emblem of those ascetics who practised heroic penance in the spirit and manner of the early canonical discipline as seen in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon penitentiaries. To the daily striving for purity and chastity the colour white was especially assigned. St Cyprian in his letters gives ample explanation of this white martyrdom, as also does our own Venerable Bede, who on the feast of All Saints speaks of the *coronas vel de virginitate candidas vel de passione purpureas*. Many an instance in the writings of the age could be quoted to illustrate the peculiar blend of red and white martyrdoms, of daily virginity and bloodless striving. Margery was no exception to this rule of the golden age of asceticism. Her whole life bears witness to the spiritual ideals of the time, ideals which she saw so vividly, interpreted so uncompromisingly and certainly never realised fully. 'Good Jesu, make my will Thy will, and Thy will my will, so that I may have no will but Thy will only'. This prayer is proof enough that Margery's mind was the mind of the saints, and her footsteps well planted on the royal road of the Holy Cross.

## A SERMON BY MEISTER EKKHART

*Translated by E. C. STOPP*

[The translation is taken from the Middle High German text from the authoritative edition of Josef Quint. Few of the sermons have as yet appeared in this edition so that the choice was limited; moreover these sermons are for the most part reconstructed somewhat disjointedly from verbatim notes. In reading this sermon therefore one should be careful to remember that here only a portion of the mystic's thought is given, and that it stands out of its context. But in view of the immense importance of Meister Eckhart in the subsequent development of mystical theology almost any words of his have a tremendous significance. At risk of misrepresenting the author this excerpt is published as being of considerable interest to those who study the development of mysticism.]

## EKKHART

*'In hoc apparuit caritas Dei in nobis' (1 John iv. 9).*



HAT has revealed the love of God, where we are concerned, is that he has sent his only-begotten Son into the world, so that we might have life through him' (that is with him and in him); for all who do not live in the Son, are surely on the wrong road'.

Suppose there were a rich king who had a beautiful daughter, and he gave her to a poor man's son, then this man's whole family would be raised and honoured. According to a master's words: 'God was made man, and this has raised and honoured the whole human race'. Well may we rejoice that Christ, our Father, ascended by his own power above all the choirs of Angels, and sits at the right hand of the Father. This master has spoken well, but I do not find his words really helpful. What good would it do me if I had a brother who was rich, and I myself were poor? What good would it do me if I had a brother who was wise, and I myself a fool?

But I want to stress something else that is nearer the point: God was not only made man; but rather, he took human nature upon himself.

The masters agree in their opinion that all men are equally noble by nature. But I say further: all the goodness that has been in all the saints and in Mary, God's Mother, and in Christ's human nature, all that is in me, my own, my nature. And now you may ask: as in my nature I own all that is in Christ's humanity, how is it that we look up to him and honour him as our Lord and our God? That is because he was God's messenger to us and brought us our bliss. The bliss that he brought us was ours. When the Father bears his Son from the depths of his essence,

then this nature comes into being. But the essence is one and simple. Here in this world something definite may appear or adhere in it, but that is not this one and simple essence.

I say something further and something difficult: He who is to dwell in the bareness of this essence and be in direct contact with it, must have won detachment from all creatures, so that he is as well disposed to the man who is beyond the seas and whom he has never seen as to the man who is near him and is his dearest friend. While you wish more good for yourself than for the man you never saw, you are surely on the wrong road and you have never even for a second gazed into that abyss of simple essence. You may have seen the truth in an image or in a dim reflection: but you have never known the best.

And secondly you must be pure of heart, for that heart alone is pure which has destroyed all creatures within it. And thirdly you must stand above all self-contradiction. What is it that burns you in hell? All the masters say it is self-will, but I say it is self-contradiction that burns you up in hell. Let me illustrate. Supposing a burning coal were laid on my hand. If I were to say that the coal is burning my hand I should be very wrong. But if I am to say what does burn me, it is the contradiction, the 'not', because the coal has in it something that my hand has 'not'. And behold this same 'not' burns me. But if my hand were identical with the coal in content and function, then it would be wholly fire by nature. If then someone took up all the fire that ever burned and threw it upon my hand, that could not hurt me. In the same way then, God and all those that stand before his face and in full bliss have something that the others who are parted from God have not. This 'not', this absence alone tortures the souls that are in hell more than any self-will or any fire. And indeed I say: as long as you are bound up in this 'not', in this self-contradiction, you are imperfect. Therefore if you would be perfect, you must be freed from all inner strife.

And further, the text which I told you at the beginning says: 'God sent his only-begotten Son into the world'; this you are not to understand as the outer world, in the way that he ate and drank with us: you are to take it as meaning the inner world. As surely as God begets his Son's human nature out of his own simple essence, as surely he begets him in the hidden depths of our spirit, and that is the inner world. Here God's abyss is my abyss and my abyss is God's abyss. Here I live from a point beyond my own self, as God lives from beyond himself. The man who has had a moment's glimpse into this abyss counts a thousand talents of gold as a bad farthing. Out of the knowledge of this abyss you are to do all that you do and do it without question. Indeed I say: while you do your works in order to gain Heaven, or God, or your eternal bliss—that is, for outer reasons, you are on the wrong road. You may pass, but this is not the best. Indeed, if you imagine you can get closer to God by solitude and introversion, in devotion, in

sweetness, and in extraordinary graces, than by the kitchen fire or in the stable, then you are no better than if you took God and wrapped his head in a cloak and pushed him under a bench. He who seeks God by ways and means, lays hold of the means and loses God who is hidden in the means. But he who seeks God immediately, lays hold of God as he is in himself; and he lives with the Son, and is life itself. If for a thousand years one were to ask life: 'why do you live'? were it to answer it would say: 'I live because I live'. That is because life lives and wells from out of itself; it lives without a 'why' because it lives out of itself. If you ask a sincere man who works from out of himself: 'why do you do your work?' were he to answer aright he would say: 'I work because I work'.

Where the creature ends, there God begins. All God asks of you is to go out of yourself as a creature and to let God be God in you. The least creaturely image that is formed in you is as great as God. Why? Because it robs you of a whole God. As soon as the image enters, God departs, and all his Godhead. But when the image goes, God enters. God's desire for you to go out of yourself as a creature is as urgent as if it were his whole bliss. Well then, dear man, what harm will it do you to let God be God in you? Go wholly out of yourself for God's sake, and God will come wholly out of himself for your sake. When both go out of themselves, what remains is wholly simple and one. In the deepest well of this simplicity God bears his Son. Then the holy Ghost comes to flower, and a loving will is engendered in God which belongs to the soul. While the will is untouched by all creatures and by all that is created, it is free. Christ says: 'No one returns to heaven but he who comes from it'. All things are made out of nothing: therefore their real origin is 'nothing'; and in the measure in which a man's noble will goes out to creatures, it dissolves with creatures into their nothingness.

Now there is one question: can this noble will dissolve in such a way as never to regain itself? The masters say, that in so far as time has carried it away it does not return. But I say: when your will turns away from itself and from all creatures and returns even only for an instant to its fountainhead, then the will is free and right again and in this one moment all lost time is redeemed.

Often people say to me, 'Pray for me'. And then I think, why do you search outside? Why do you not stay within and use your own wealth? For the essence of all reality is within you.

That we may remain within ourselves in such a way as to come to all truth without means and without distinctions, in true bliss —to this may God's help lead us. Amen

*Fragments.* (Edition Pfeiffer—page 600, Nos. 10, 12, 13.)

Meister Ekkhart says: He who is at all times alone within himself, is worthy of God; and God is ever present to him who is

always at home within himself; and in him who lives at all times in an eternal 'now', God is ever bearing his Son anew.

God lets nothing befall us which is not meant to entice us to himself. I will never thank God for the fact that he loves me, for he cannot do otherwise. His nature forces him to love; I will thank him because in his goodness he does not stop loving me.

The highest that the human spirit can achieve in this body is to have in all a steady dwelling place which lies beyond all. To dwell beyond all, is to dwell in recollection and in mere sufferance of one's self and of all things. To dwell in all, is to dwell in constant stillness, that is, in an intuition of the eternal image, where the image of all things glows in simplicity and in oneness.

### R E V I E W S

WHATSOEVER HE SHALL SAY: The First 'Theophila' Correspondence.

By Fr F. Valentine, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 5s.)

Those who so easily say: 'Such things are too high for me!' will thank THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT for making known this encouraging book. It all grows out of the first letter. 'Theophila' writes that she has no 'spiritual difficulties'—but perhaps because she has no spiritual life at all! 'Deep down', she wants to give everything to God—but how? Not in a convent! (She is indeed just now explaining to St Joseph exactly the kind of husband she wants . . .) 'To give'? Just now she wants to *get*! Is she merely 'using' our Lord and our Lady? Our Lady called herself God's handmaid: Theophila fears it may be she who wants to be waited on. Her parish priest, preaching on: 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth', said that perhaps most Catholics pray: 'Hear, Lord, for thy servant speaketh'! Happy the soul whom Fr Valentine indeed 'directs': he is no mere inquisitor, or dissector, nor 'manages' a soul as they propose, today, to 'manage' the masses who can't do it for themselves!

He goes to the root of the matter. 'God has made us'—so says the Catechism: but God is *making* us, and from within, and the more powerfully when we let him have his own way. (See Fr de Caussade.) But this means not merely 'do not interfere'—it means 'loving co-operation'. (St Francis de Sales; St Jeanne de Chantal.) This certainly implies Prayer: but *how* pray? Prayer is not talking to, or even thinking about, *Self*. Fr Valentine, far from despising 'vocal' prayer (inadequate epithet, really; but by now stereotyped), regrets the disuse of *prayer-books* (and shows how spiritual reading must *feed* prayer): he stresses the value of 'petition' and the need of protecting 'loving spontaneity' by Reverence (Abbot Marmion), itself often to be safeguarded by the use of 'formulas'. (A Roman chauffeur, pleased that I had spoken to an even poorer man in polite formulas, said to

me: 'The poor have only respect to offer to one another: but human nature having its weaknesses, *respect* requires *forms* in order to maintain itself'. How an English taxi-driver would have put that, I am not too sure!) Fr Valentine, gently leading Theophila away from misuse of imagination and 'reasoning', yet does not over-stress the difference between 'meditation as such' and prayer—that 'as such' on which the abbé Bremond, good French logician, always insisted! Do we ever make a méditation-as-such? Is not the most discursive meditation 'shot through' by prayer, or at least desire for prayer, which is already a union with God? Thus Benedictine *laborare*, being 'prayer-ful', is already *orare*. W. G. Ward, enthralled by an opera, making 'never so many' acts of pure love! The saint, ecstasied by a flower, forgetting neither it nor God! The prophet, seeing the whole world and its ending *in* a city and its sack! While thinking, to be aware of and to be rendering homage to That which is beyond all thought, let alone imagination. Happily this book is not controversial, but leads Theophila sweetly, firmly and gaily to the happy point where prayer, 'the lifting of mind and heart to God', is due rather to *God* lifting it, than to herself pushing from underneath, and to the 'Carmelite' love for the Trinity, evidently present and active in the soul. The lucky young lady is to receive two more books of letters.

C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? By Father James, O.F.M.Cap. (The Mercier Press; 7s. 6d.)

Father James answers yes, and adds explanations to convince the still sceptical 'no-men' and to encourage the still faint-hearted 'yes-men'. Not everyone, probably, will find the explanations entirely satisfying; philosophers who are 'specialists' might protest that too much is assumed and too little analysed; and from their specialised point of view they would be right. They would be wrong however to disparage Father James's book for not laying all their doubts about existence; for it does not pretend to that, but only 'to suggest the broad outlines of a Christian philosophy of life' and so to give 'the plain man' what he so badly needs, namely intelligible principles to serve him in the task of making his life more intelligible and intelligent. Even this is no easy thing to do; if Father James has not failed he owes it quite as much to his enthusiasm and to his gentle generosity of spirit as to any power of thought or expression.

Two points touching his general approach may be noted. First, Father James insists on the continuity of wisdom: beginning with an implicit philosophy, an 'instinctive faith' in the order and meaning of reality as a whole, it ends with the vision of God. He deplores the *separation in practice* of philosophy from theology, while admitting the *distinction* of their domains. Here, surely, he is, in the main, right; and these words are well worth attention: 'No amount of analysis or discussion can get rid of the fact that there is, and has been, a Christian philosophy of life. That the Thomistic *distinction* of reason and faith . . . useful when it was a question of meeting adversaries

who said our philosophy was . . . indistinguishable from faith should have grown into a *separation* of the two disciplines of a Christian mind is . . . deplorable'.

And this leads to the second point. If I may interpret Father James's purpose, I think he is trying to bridge the gap between the minds of ordinary men and those of professionally trained priests—and is not the priest's own mind 'ordinary' as well as professional? For Father James is well aware that the problem stated by the title of his book comes into actual and critical existence as a struggle in the soul of the ordinary man for whom he writes; which mere statements of dogma or appeals to blind faith do not suffice to calm. Aware as a priest of his responsibility for feeding the poor in spirit with doctrine, he knows that doctrinal food must be, in some degree, intelligible food. Hence his priestly undertaking in this book to build a bridge (*pontifex*) between the first stirrings or confused glimpses of the natural mind and the Creed. He wants to communicate an assurance of the immensities implied in the former and effectively realised and confirmed by the divine initiative expressed in the latter. So he dwells especially on the Incarnation, the 'descent of God in love' which answers the demand of Martineau: 'You say, he is everywhere; then show me *anywhere* that you have met him . . .'

Father James has no turn for epigram, but his words are often deeper than they seem at first. The God of the consistent cheat, he says, is 'the supreme Quack' because a man's actions are 'somehow an appeal to the inner essence of his universe'. I like too the notion that sound philosophy 'somersaults' the world of unreflecting common sense, putting spirit in the place of matter as the major part of reality. That is philosophy's way of exalting the humble; and what a relief it brings to the mind! The whole context (ch. 3) deserves attentive reading.

The printer or proof-reader has nodded several times; and *Hamlet* is misquoted on p. 22.

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

**THE SECRET OF ST MARTIN.** By Henry Ghéon, translated by F. J. Sheed (Sheed & Ward; 7s. 6d.)

November 11th was a day that marked an armistice. It was a day that was already dedicated to peace, for St Martin, the ex-soldier who became a monk and a bishop, exemplifies the serenity of mind and fellowship of charity which, St Augustine reminds us, are the marks of a virtue that is so much more than an armistice. It is good, then, that M. Ghéon should have turned his gift—which he shared with our own Fr Martindale—of bringing the saints to life again, to Martin of Tours: of all patrons perhaps the most apposite for our generation.

His was a life of miracles: not merely the manifest showing forth of God's power through a human instrument made wholly responsive to his demands, but, too, the countless fruits of the life of grace—of penance and apostolic preaching, of acts of mercy and of the most human understanding. The very land of France is a litany of dedica-

tions that proclaim one who at the end of his life could say *Non recuso laborem*.

It is a pity, therefore, that a natural French patriotism should sometimes mar so sympathetic a book. Thus, 'At no time has a Christian been forbidden to bear arms. . . . Conscientious objection is an invention of the ages of anarchic liberalism and marks a great disorder in the spirit' (p. 24). Would it not be truer to say, 'At no time has a Christian been allowed to bear arms, save in a just cause'? And, without wishing to argue from the admittedly difficult evidence provided by the conduct of early Christians under the Empire, is not 'conscientious objection' a proper description of Martin's refusal to bear arms? 'He did not see how a soldier of Christ could fight against his neighbour', as M. Ghéon himself remarks. The dubious logic of modern pacifism need not deflect one from recognising the force and meaning of Martin's gesture.

Again, one is unhappy about too confident a categorising of national virtues. 'Slav or Celt or Latin, he (Martin) came from Hungary to Gaul, and was altogether in harmony with the way of thought which was to become the special way of the French' (viz. 'supreme good sense'). The saints, it is true, are men of flesh and blood, born with love for a land and a language that is their own, which love, ennobled by grace, can never be at war with the love of God that possesses them. Yet they transcend their time and place; and it is only occasionally, one must add, that M. Ghéon is distracted by a pride which acknowledges what is certainly the truth—that Martin made France great.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

HUNTER OF SOULS. By Fr Edmund, C.P. (Gill, Dublin; 8s. 6d.)

This excellent popular biography of St Paul of the Cross, founder of the Passionist Congregation, will make known to English readers one who wrote: 'I had the desire for the conversion of heretics, especially in England and the neighbouring kingdoms . . .', the desire inspiring the Venerable Dominic Barberi. Fr Edmund divides his book into two parts: the history of Paul's life and foundations and a study of some aspects of his personality—the Founder, the Mystic Missionary, Director, Saint of the Cross. In the Office of his Feast St Paul is called 'animarum venator', 'hunter of souls'. He appears to have been inspired in his foundation of the Passionists by the ideals and methods of several religious bodies: Trappists, Carthusians, Franciscans, Jesuits, but his spirit was his own and his Congregation has its own special form and characteristic means. The apostolic activity of St Paul with its distinctive means, the preaching of the Passion and Cross, finds its inspiration and power in personal holiness through an eremitical life in which the contemplation of the Passion and the practice of mortification play chief part. The spirit of prayer, of solitude, of poverty, are the basis of an arduous apostolic life expressed largely in the giving of retreats and missions.

There are some things of which one would wish to learn more, e.g., St Paul 'seems to have been haunted by the fear that excessive appli-

cation to study might be fraught with danger to contemplative prayer' (p. 123). Could such an important spiritual text as 'the Diary' be made available in English? The frontispiece is, perhaps, based upon a 'vera effigies', but is unfortunately touched up and made to look like a photograph of a strong saint. DAMIAN MAGRATH, O.P.

**LORD SHREWSBURY, PUGIN, AND THE CATHOLIC REVIVAL.** By Denis Gwynn. (Hollis & Carter; 10s. 6d.)

For many years the Oxford Movement, culminating in the conversion of Newman in 1845, was regarded as the main factor in the Catholic revival, whereas that revival had made great headway long before the Oxford Movement had brought any converts to the Church. A few Catholic laymen set themselves the enormous task of restoring dignity and beauty to the churches in England and of opening new centres of missionary activity in districts where the Faith was extinct. Their courage and immediate success raised doubts and suspicion among the older Catholics who thought this to be a case in which zeal outran discretion. Italian Passionists wearing the habit of their Order in public, a community of monks at Charnwood Forest, churches springing up with surprising rapidity, choirs of plainchant enthusiasts, all these things were something of a shock to those who, disheartened by fines and disabilities, feared that this violent outbreak of religious fervour might revive an equally violent attack from Protestant bigots. Remarkable personalities held the stage during this determined effort to counteract the deadening effects of heresy and schism. Foremost among them were Ambrose Phillips, who encountered no opposition to his schemes, and in consequence looked through rose-coloured spectacles at the rapid conversions taking place in his neighbourhood and gloried in his Trappist Foundation and his Catholic School at Grace Dieu, then Pugin the genius, scampering hither and thither with his Gothic drawings for churches and almshouses, his rood-screens, chasubles as large as bedspreads, and all ecclesiastical paraphernalia of past ages, which frequently irked those of a quieter outlook, who reflected that the Church was a living organism and not a museum of antiquities. Immeasurably above these impetuous enthusiasts stands the revered figure of Lord Shrewsbury, known as the 'good earl John'. In him we see, reading this excellent book, a noble soul, whose munificence in providing means for church building was the outward expression of a burning desire to bring England back to the Faith for the greater glory of God.

FABIAN DIX, O.P.

**SPIRITUAL POWERHOUSE.** Third Order of St Dominic. By Fr Wendell, O.P. (American Tertiary Bureau; 25c.)

In fourteen short chapters, Fr Francis Wendell, O.P., gives concise and valuable information concerning the secular Third Order and explains the obligations incumbent on its members. He makes it clear that it differs greatly from a sodality or confraternity in the generally accepted definitions of those terms. The Third Order ranks above them canonically. A confraternity has for its purpose some public worship, and a pious union exists

for the exercise of some specific work of piety or charity. The Third Order on the other hand provides for its members a Papally approved way of life which enters not only into their worship or their charity but into everything they do. In speaking of its origin, Fr Wendell rightly remarks that it is shrouded in uncertainty. He gives one theory which we venture to think is open to grave questioning. According to Bl. Raymund of Capua, he says, the Third Order had its origin in a group of laymen established by St Dominic's friend, Bishop Foulques, and called the Militia of Jesus Christ, whose object it was to defend the rights of the Church. But there was already an Order of Penance which became split up into branch fraternities, and these in time displayed such an anti-clerical attitude that the Papal legate, alarmed at their numbers, ordered them to separate into groups. Those who settled in close proximity to the Dominican Friars placed themselves under their direction, and thus they continued until 1285, when the then Master General, Munio de Zamora, gave them a Rule which was the sign of their formal affiliation to the Order. At this time the Friars of Venice and Siena had produced in one volume documents concerning the Order of Penance and the Militia, and if Bl. Raymund consulted these writings he may have concluded that the Third Order was the outcome of the Militia, whereas in spite of a similarity in dress the aims of the Order of Penance were quite different from those of the Militia and the Order was in being before the Militia was heard of. This criticism in no way detracts from the excellence of Fr Wendell's treatise, nor is it of great import, for after all, it is more important to know where we are going than whence we came.

FABIAN DIX, O.P.

LA SAINTE VIERGE. Figure de l'Eglise (Editions du Cerf. Black-friars; 7s.)

The ambition of a 'Cahier' of *La Vie Spirituelle*, the preface to this symposium tells us, is to present a point of doctrine whole and complete. In the present volume the Editor has certainly cast his net wide, and in 290 pages he has gathered eight theological treatises on our Lady as well as other practical and historical notes, which even include a list of the religious Orders and Congregations bearing the name of the Mother of God and of her shrines of pilgrimage throughout the world. In the latter the reader will be pleased to find not only Walsingham but also our Lady of Cambridge, of Penice, of Melrose, and many others, excluding however Carfin.

The Marial theology begins with an exegesis of the Annunciation and all that is related to it in the Gospels, by Père Bernard, O.P. The doctrine of virginity which brings, through Mary, a new type of fecundity into the world is shown to be fundamental to the understanding of the *Mater et Socia Christi*, a conception so important in modern teaching and devotion. But the author of this article, Père M. J. Nicolas, already well known to readers of THE

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, leads on to a special discussion of her title of *Mater Misericordiae*. The *pièce de résistance* of the book is the essay, *Eve, l'Eglise et Marie*, by Père Henry, the editor of *La Vie Spirituelle*. The author takes us back to the original patristic teaching on the mystery of the New Eve and shows how our Lady and the Church are both Mothers in their special ways of the whole body of the faithful. St Augustine insists that the Church is the Virgin Mother and in this way she continues on earth not only the life and work of her divine Son, but of Mary herself. This is important particularly for Christian womanhood, which carries on this function in the world, either in the cloister or at the hearth. Père Henry's thesis is not devoid of immediate practical application to modern life.

An article on the Assumption is of interest in view of the recent desire for the definition of that event. Again much help may be gained from the articles on the Rosary and the spiritual life in relation to our Lady. She will indeed be honoured and more fitly praised as a result of this publication.

C.P.

**THE REVELATION OF ST JOHN THE DIVINE.** With lithographs by Hans Feibusch. (Collins; 16s.)

Like the book that the angel gave to St John to eat—containing the heavenly secret that he must convey—the resultant book of his own Apocalypse is offered to be eaten: not merely to be read, but to be assimilated. To use it thus is much more feasible if it can be obtained in an outward form that is to one's taste. Here, in this most recent edition, it is presented in a form that is most acceptable. The text is that of the Authorised Version. The printing is very fine, in what appears to be the Baskerville type, strong and simple like a monumental inscription. Though light and slender, it is a large book that lends itself to be read with something of liturgical solemnity—for 'blessed is he that readeth the words of this prophecy'. And there are twenty-one full-page coloured lithograph illustrations by Hans Feibusch, a painter best known perhaps for his mural pictures. These lithographs have all the character, in miniature, of good mural decorations. They are original and powerful, they have a grand sweep; but they do not overflow their proper subject. They are a work of art that also contrives to be a humble illustration of a still greater work of art.

E. A.

**LIFE OUT OF DEATH.** By Rev. C. Hoare, Father of Sion. (G. Coldwell; 6d.)

Under this interesting title we have the life of Blessed Marie Thérèse de Soubiran La Louviere, Foundress of the Society of Marie Auxiliatrice, whose beatification took place lately in Rome. In comparatively few pages we have the history of a woman unique among religious foundresses, for she was turned out of her own community, and only brought back to it after her death.

Sophie Thérèse de Soubiran La Louvière was born in France in 1835. Even as a child she was drawn to the religious life and prayed for a vocation. When she was older she wanted to be a Carmelite, but her uncle, Canon de Soubiran, who strikes one as a somewhat tiresome man, although we are assured by the writer that he was 'a very zealous priest', set his face against it. He wanted his niece to help him in his pet scheme of founding a *béguinage* in France on the model of those in Belgium. Sophie was not attracted to the idea, but at last, persuaded that it must be God's will for her, she gave in, and her uncle had his way. In due time they founded the *béguinage*, and Sophie was appointed Superior at the age of 21, and was known as Mother Marie Thérèse. But it did not satisfy her. The life in a *béguinage* is neither wholly religious nor wholly secular. It seemed to Mother Marie Thérèse that she was neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring (the French have doubtless a more elegant way of expressing it), and eventually she and those of her companions who felt as she did decided that they must leave the *béguinage* and become real nuns. It ended in the foundation of the Society of Marie Auxiliatrice, a community bound by the vows of religion, whose lives were given up to prayer and good works, chiefly for the children of the poor, for orphans, and for working girls living away from their homes in the industrial cities.

The first foundation was at Toulouse. Mother Marie Thérèse had been appointed Superior-General. There were many vocations. Father Hoare writes that 'generous souls were attracted by this life of prayer and apostle-ship. Moreover, Mother Marie Thérèse had the gift of winning souls; there was something magnetic about her personality'. All went well. But it is not in success that saints are formed. Mother Marie Thérèse had offered herself to God, knowing that she would have to bear the cross. Among those who came to join the Society was a 'middle-aged lady, well connected, of distinguished bearing'. She was professed under the name of Sister Marie François. Her charm of manner and her intelligence captivated the Superior-General, who nominated her as the Mother Assistant. The contrast between the two women is well brought out in a few words: Mother Marie Thérèse, holy and humble; Mother Marie François, 'domineering, unstable, and ambitious'.

The rest of the story should be read in Father Hoare's little book. It is worth reading. Besides giving us the life of Blessed Marie Thérèse and the heroic suffering of her latter years, we have at the end a clear summary of the Rule of Life, the spirit, and the work of the Society of Marie Auxiliatrice, with a few words about their London foundations, one of which suffered badly in the late war. And the little book only costs 6d.

FF.R.

#### ADDENDUM

In the January issue a line was omitted at the foot of page 198. It should read: 'This Langland insisted upon particularly for the lax clergy who constructed the Church, but who, like the carpenters who constructed Noah's ark, perish in the deluge of their own sins'.

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